

PUBLIC TRANSIT DISTRICT TASK FORCE

Membership

Sen. L. Alma Mansell, Senate Chair
Rep. Raymond Short, House Chair

Sen. E. George Mantes
Sen. Howard Stephenson

Rep. Ron Bigelow
Rep. Afton B. Bradshaw

Rep. Neal B. Hendricksen
Rep. Kurt E. Oscarson
Rep. Michael G. Waddoups

Staff

Benjamin N. Christensen, Research Analyst
Dee S Larsen, Associate General Counsel
Wendy Bangerter, Secretary

Background

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) is a public transit district that provides bus services for 70 to 80 percent of the population of the state. The Legislature enacted enabling statutes to allow municipalities and counties to form a public transit district by a vote of the people, and authorize a 1/4 cent sales and use tax dedicated to the district. In 1970, the first municipalities formed the UTA. In subsequent years, every major municipality and county along the Wasatch Front has joined the UTA, with the exception of unincorporated Utah County. The UTA board is appointed based on a formula provided by statute (see Section 17A-2-1038).

Over the years, controversy has arisen regarding various policies and practices of UTA, including a complaint that UTA and its board is not accountable to the public. The complaints have led to various proposals to change the way the UTA board is selected. H.B. 501, "Public Transit District Task Force," which passed during the 1996 General Session, created a task force to study the issues related to the governance of UTA.

The task force looked at audit findings that the Legislative Auditor General completed over the past several years relating to the UTA. UTA's history, mission, development, operation, budget, and strategic planning were reviewed. Advertising cost/benefits, legal expenses, land purchase practices, and involvement with the Utah Healthcare Purchasing Alliance by UTA were studied. A controversy over the replacement of a UTA board member arose during the year which

highlighted a conflict of who should appoint the board member's replacement and whether the size of the board could or should be expanded from the current 14-member board. With the assistance of a working group which included mayors, county commissioners, and others, the task force developed and adopted three pieces of legislation to address some of the major concerns of the task force.

Committee Action

The task force made its recommendations which included three pieces of legislation to the committee. The committee adopted the task force's recommended legislation titled "Transit District Collections and Budget" and "Transit District Authority" and amended and adopted "Public Transit District Boards." The committee considered this issue at its November meeting.

HB
169

SB 84